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## DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ETHNIC EXCLUSION: THE CASE OF THE ZEZURU INFORMAL ECONOMY IN BOTSWANA

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**ABSTRACT** This article discusses Botswana's development policies and its silent exclusion of minority groups, particularly the Zezuru. Focusing on the case of the Zezuru, the paper seeks to demonstrate that historical ethnic discrimination and exclusion has blinded the government's economic diversification strategy. It draws a parallel between government policies and negligence in particular projects that fall within the scope of the diversification strategy. It discusses the government's failure to engage the Zezuru into modernizing their informal economy. It also discusses the lack of Zezuru access to the venture capital provided by government meant to improve the formal economy. It looks into the fiscal risks and lost benefits to the government while the Zezuru informal economy remains strong. The author conclusively argues that the economic exclusion of the Zezuru in development policy implementation is a setback in the overall diversification strategy.

**Key Words:** Botswana; Zezuru; Socioeconomic exclusion; Informal economy.

### INTRODUCTION

Botswana is a democratic middle-income state located at the heart of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It gained independence from Britain in 1966. Before independence, its GDP per capita income was US\$60, among the three poorest nations in the world. Great Britain had not economically invested in the country, having perceived it as barren of natural resources. Hence the country only inherited UK£7,000 and 2 km of tarred road from Great Britain (Masire & Lewis, 2006). The discovery of diamonds in Botswana turned its fortunes. Its GDP per capita income rose to US\$80 in 1966, and currently stands at US\$7,500 (Nocera, 2008). Some observers note that prudent fiscal and monetary policies coupled with good governance led to relative prosperity in Botswana (Leith, 2005: 2–12). The country thus attained its current middle-income status economy among African nations.

There have been few government measures attempted, hence little progress, in dealing with the economic setback from the global recession of 2008. Conteh (2008) argues that Botswana's macroeconomic indicators tend to hide the structural factors that account for the poverty rate that stands at 40%. The reality has been much grimmer. First, as a result of the recession, the top two buyers of Botswana's diamonds, the USA and Japan, have been unable to maintain diamond purchase quotas. Second, in 2011, beef, the second largest export earner, was suspended by the European Union due to failure in meeting new standards (Tabane, 2011). Third, tourism, the third largest sector, faced stiffer regional competition

from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, as a result of the increased cost of living in Botswana (TICAD, 2009: 25). Perhaps the principal failure dates back to the lethargic engagement in development policies when Botswana had a regional economic advantage (Lange, 2004). Nevertheless, the author argues that the worst problem has been the government's inability to adopt a development strategy to practically engage in an all-inclusive industrial indigenization policy. More often than not, the development strategy has been encapsulated in an intricate process, characterized by ethnic politics of invisibility and indifference.

Ethnicity plays a major but silent role in Botswana's development process. It is important to downplay the myth of a homogenous Botswana society where development resources are evenly distributed (Molefe & Mguni, 2000). There is evidence of an ethnic bias in wealth distribution, whereby the minorities often have less access to economic resources and thus rely on government welfare systems or other subsidies that grossly reduce their economic activities to subsistence levels (Good, 2003). Negligence of, discrimination against, and invisibility of some minority groups is a continuing problem as a result of early post-independence attempts to assimilate the non-Tswana speaking groups into the larger Tswana speaking groups, which comprise about 75 percent of the current population (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008). One particular ethnic minority that remains largely marginalized is the Zezuru community. Ironically, they remain a highly entrepreneurial ethnic group whose informal economy evinces success in some of the sectors that the present policies aim to develop in the mainstream society: manufacturing, textiles and services. However, as a result of the ethnic discrimination and exclusion, (a) the Zezuru entrepreneurship is underutilized as a model for the implementation of schemes in which the government spends millions (b) the community is underutilized as a reference, and (c) the people are neglected in the broader consultations aimed at identifying solutions for the diversification of the diamond-dependent economy. This is a case of ethnic exclusion presenting costs to broader development objectives.

This article focuses on the Zezuru economic reality in Botswana for several reasons. The Zezuru form a more interesting study because their case encompasses the three analytic components of ethnic minority, informal economy, and economic exclusion. While other studies have fully discussed the politics of ethnic minorities in Botswana, they have been limited to the political and social dimensions without a full exegesis of the economic aspects (Werbner, 2004; Van Waarden, 1988; Mwakikagile, 2010; Van Binsbergen, 1994). The Zezuru have, for no apparent reason, not been at the epicentre of these discussions. Although there are anthropological confluences between the Zezuru and the Kalanga, that is not the focus of this paper (Tshambani, 1979).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present corpus underpinning international and sustainable development can be best captured within the non-traditional security discourse. Not only has the UN taken on this conceptual view, other countries such as Japan, Canada and now

even Switzerland and the European Union commission have embraced it (MacFarlane & Khong 2006). Human security discourse involves approaches that accommodate or exclude government involvement in the empowerment of local populations. One group posits that the state should remain central to the attainment of human security goals (Peou, 2009). The other group posits that human security objectives must be pursued beyond the realms and auspices of the state (Umegaki et al., 2009). In the case of Botswana there is certainly no way the government can be absent from human security initiatives for a plethora of reasons, one of which is that the small and impoverished population is scattered over a vast mass of land. Moreover, there is no visible rationale to debate development policy without the state of Botswana.

In recent scholarly debates, there are arguments regarding the role of indigenous institutions and populations in development. Some point out that development challenges in Africa result from the negligence and underutilization of indigenous human and intellectual capital (Ayittey, 2006). This takes the debate away from meta-theoretical levels, notably the world systems theory, which often point to external causes such as neo-colonialism, wherein former colonial powers maintain control over the economies of their former colonies (Noble, 2000: 192).<sup>(1)</sup> It accommodates the view that, contrary to neo-colonial arguments, Africa has always been a capitalist society with free trade relying on free markets (Ayittey, 1992; Snow, 1988). The problem is the failure to indigenize the process of development. This failure is appositely captured by the parallel success of Asian development where indigenous or local systems and practices were aptly combined with those of the modern and economic. One view stated that, "Americans believe in 'consumer economics' while Japanese believe in 'producer economics'" (Chen, 1995: 36). In a similar manner, the Korean development case owes part of its success to a similar development economics realignment process named "complementarity" (Aoki, 1994). Herein lies a case of conflict of loyalties in economics. Similarly, in Botswana the Zezuru as one of the most entrepreneurial minorities are neglected, especially in the preference for invoking external forms of economics. However, the idea here is not that the Zezuru exhibit a unique model in economics, but rather, the invocation of the Japanese and Korean analogy seeks to underscore the need to build third world economies from within, improving them based on international standards so as to engraft them onto the broader international political economy, and make them adhere to the best practices of developed countries.

The systemic exclusion of ethnic minorities in the development process is captured by a number of authors. In the most extreme and common case is the deliberate exclusion of minorities in the development process through means of deprivation, while minorities are allowed to develop in the least sense to a predetermined ceiling that changes systematically with time (Smith, 1981; Levenstein, 2004). The conceptual case here is whether or not the Zezuru community is perceived as an ethnic minority. They are first and foremost citizens of a democratic society. In the second place, development in a democratic state is inclusive and needs to support the aspirations of the people. The state cannot discriminate. Moreover the state has no legitimate grounds to sieve who can or cannot constitute the vanguard of a reformist course. Such economic exclusion, especially of a social

nature, betrays not only the upholding of human rights but the constitutional fabric of Botswana which, as a democratic republic, proffers equal economic opportunity and treatment (Constitution of Botswana: Sections 3–19, Sections 20–29).

## ANALYTICAL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This article adopts analytic eclecticism as the primary analytical base. Analytical eclecticism is a pragmatist approach that seeks to find middle ground between strong theoretical assumptions and practice, by avoiding “more narrowly parsed research puzzles” meant to fit certain theoretical arguments (Sil & Katzenstein, 2008: 412). The constituent idea is that this paper does not seek to advance a strong theoretical thread in minority studies, but seeks to discuss the subject on a more empirical level that leans closer to policy issues than concerns with theorems. In essence, this approach is “a commonsensical approach to research” which is largely adopted in international studies (Friedrichs & Kratochwil, 2009: 708–709). This approach also comprises what is perceived as event analysis, which works by deriving logical arguments from a phenomenon and inductively proceeding to derive causal impressions from a given phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010: 326–331). This analytic approach is thus preferred by the author in order to retain empirical sharpness and relevance in the discussion at hand, rather than have them lost in theoretical debates. This is because the paper is at best a theory-affirming case study and does not present a radical departure from the already existing theoretical frameworks and corpus on minority studies.

The broader methodology largely remains qualitative, and does not engage in econometrics. It is a combination of a historical approach and survey analysis. The historical aspect makes use of the literature on the history of Botswana as well as that of the minorities found in Botswana, including the *Zezuru*. The survey analysis includes the use of data from primary and secondary documentary sources. Primary sources include policy papers and statistical data. Secondary sources of data include published papers on the subject of development policy, economic diversification, minority politics of Botswana, as well as carefully selected (non-polemic) press articles on the subject of the *Zezuru*. This study also includes an ethnographic element that involves observations and immersion that constitutes interviews sporadically conducted between the areas of Francistown and Gaborone.<sup>(2)</sup> These were conducted in 2008 prior to my graduate program and from April to June in 2011 during my graduate program.

## DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

The Botswana economy faced its first major challenges in 1990. The recession that ensued during that period undermined the economic growth that was heavily reliant on mining. The double-digit GDP growth ceased as its European and American markets incurred huge setbacks from the recession (Valentine, 1993a). The economy recovered and continually relied on mineral exports, buttressed by beef

exports and tourism. However, a key turnaround in 1990 was the fall of the Soviet Union. Botswana's distinction as the only thriving democracy in Southern Africa faded. More countries democratized in the region: Namibia in 1990, followed by South Africa in 1994 and the end of the Angolan civil conflict in 2002. Subsequent to the stabilization of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), trade within the region improved significantly between South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Angola, and Mozambique (Chauvin, 2004: 29–32). Better governance and improved infrastructure also resulted in more foreign direct investment for other countries such as Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, yet Botswana and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) witnessed steady, or worse, declining investment (Kibasomba, 2004: 110–113). Botswana became less competitive due to higher production costs, insufficient human capital, and higher taxes.

Botswana's inability to learn from its regional neighbours posits questions about its development policy. First, unlike Mauritius, Botswana did not foresee the need to diversify the economy while it had a regional political advantage. Mauritius diversified its economy away from mono-crops to textiles and manufacturing industries to build a modern economy in the 1970s, resulting in a more equal society (Mistry & Treebhooon, 2009; Sawkut, 2008). Botswana maintained a diamond-led economy for more than two decades, and failed to pursue an integrated economy. This has resulted in an enclave development model centred on mineral resources, which also led to inequalities that placed Botswana next to Namibia as the world's most unequal societies (Sentsho, 2003). Second, while Botswana and Seychelles shared a history of a mixed economy based on parastatal corporations,<sup>(3)</sup> most of those in Seychelles converted into internationally competitive private companies (McKee et al., 2000: 160–163). The privatization of the Botswana's fourteen parastatal corporations has stalled since the late 1990s, for political, demographic and market reasons (Jeffries, 1995; Dunning, 2005; Good & Hughes, 2002). It is not clear if Botswana intends to make privatization a major part of its economic diversification strategy. The readiness of groups including invisible ethnic minorities to broaden the private sector begs this question.

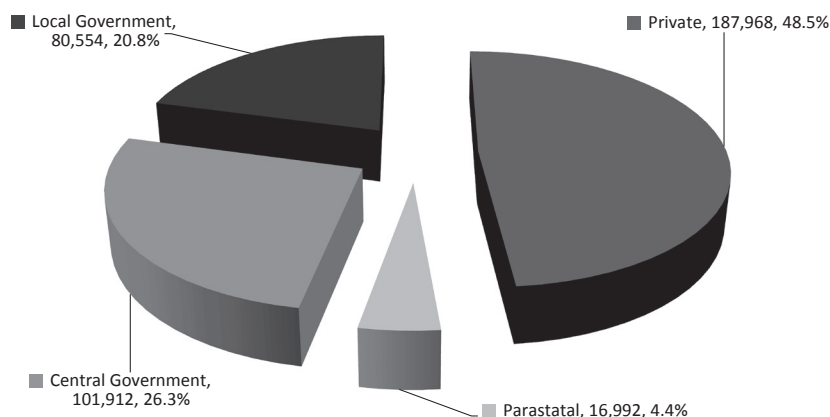
Botswana sustained a stable economy over a number of decades. However, since the late 1990s there have been concerns about the modernization of the economy. In 2002, then President Festus Mogae, summarized this necessity in the following words:

The primary focus of Botswana has been to prepare Botswana for a transition from a traditional agro-based economy to an industrial one... a diversified and expanded curriculum that includes subjects such as Business Studies, Art [and Design], Design and Technology and Computer Studies would enhance the development of entrepreneurial and employment skills among school leavers. (Lauglo & Maclean, 2005: 11–12)

From 2009 the government of Botswana, under President Ian Khama, President Mogae's successor, subsequently introduced the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) initiative. Some economists and analysts have highlighted some of the main challenges facing the EDD. Some pointed out that the development policies under

this initiative “have been piecemeal, fragmented and uncoordinated” (Sekwati, 2011: 6). Sekwati further explained the infeasibility of the economic diversification drive: First, the process is heavily politicized with the Office of the President leaving little room for the private sector to be truly in charge of the process. Second, the government is reluctant to fully engage institutions such as the University of Botswana and Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis for research and development, resulting in parallel policy formulation and analysis processes. This incongruence raised questions as to whether the EDD is purely a political project that does not require scientific input from the available intellectual capital in order to ensure its success.

Some of the initiatives other than the EDD did not make a serious contribution to the economy, yet the official statistics obscure these realities. For example, Botswana’s larger share of the overall population is in the rural areas, yet the local government employment share is low, failing to create employment. Fig. 1 below seeks to represent employment creation in Botswana according to different sectors of the economy.

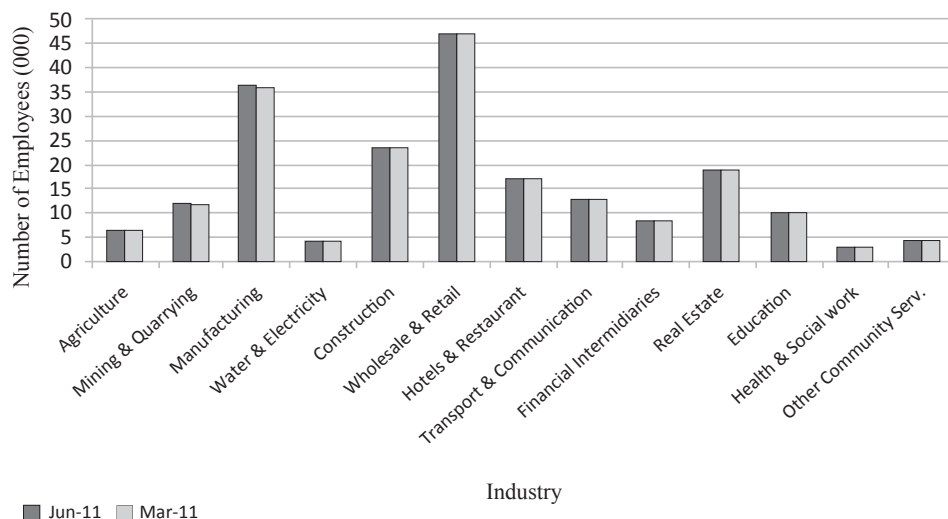


**Fig. 1.** Sectorial Employment Distribution (Source: Central Statistics Office, 2012)

The problem with this graph is that it also includes the number of those employed under the *Ipelegeng* programme. *Ipelegeng*, a reincarnation of the Drought Relief Programme, provides cheap labour for government development projects such as roads maintenance and other manual labour at the local government level. These forms of employment fall under the responsibility of the local government. According to some economists, their remuneration stands at P500 (US\$57) per month, far below the minimum wage and not qualifying as a formal employment creation (Selatlhwa, 2013). A review of the programme by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA) revealed that it is unsustainable, inconsistent with government development policy and does not address poverty eradication (BIDPA, 2012). These projects often do not generate any form of revenue or promote industrialization in any way.



One of the problems with Botswana's development story is that the statistics often obscure the grotesque underlying economic realities (Manatsha & Maharjan, 2009). The aforementioned is a far-reaching and persisting phenomenon also reflected in Figure 2 below and the attending analysis:



**Fig. 2.** Industry Employment Statistics (Source: Central Statistics Office, 2012)

The graph above gives the impression that many citizens are employed in the wholesale and retail sector. It obscures the fact that most wholesale and retail businesses are run by Indians and Chinese merchants, who often employ their fellow citizens in the top tiers and underpay many Batswana (Ookeditse, 2012). The statistics under manufacturing also does not elucidate whether or not the manufacturing sector is diversified. There are other politics regarding ownership and control of the hotel and tourism sector, which are beyond the scope of this article.

The vulnerability of Botswana's economy is evinced by its reliance on uncertain sources of revenues, namely, the South Africa-based and controlled Southern African Customs Union (SACU), [which is a revenue sharing mechanism for former Common Rand Area<sup>(4)</sup> countries, from which Botswana gets 17% of its GDP<sup>(5)</sup>] and mineral resource revenues. Much of the discourse on Botswana's miracle growth tells a small fraction of the story and often obscures long-term challenges. Apart from SACU revenues, Botswana's economy is heavily reliant on diamonds. Diamonds roughly constitute 77.43% of Botswana's mineral revenue (Department of Mines, 2002: 9). The acme of development in Botswana is the good management of fiscal, natural and mineral resources, mainly diamonds in this case, as well as very low levels of corruption as compared to other African countries (Mbaku, 2007: 84–116). However, there are some challenges. First, the constitution of Botswana's revenue base is not very solid, since diamonds only make a



limited contribution to the GDP. The largest source of Botswana's revenues has been the SACU, followed by mineral revenues and then the profits from the Bank of Botswana, i.e. reserve bank (Modise, 1999: 77–91). With the future of SACU and diamonds sales uncertain, Botswana, especially given the small private sector, faces the threat of losing a large share of its revenue sources. Second, Botswana like most economies based on resource extraction, has higher levels of inequality and poverty (Clover, 2003). The Incomes Policy of 1972, which was meant to avoid rapid wage escalation and reduce income disparities and social disharmony, has hardly been implemented and failed to achieve its objectives (Siphambe, 2007: 23–24). Third, the undiversified economy is not sustainable as the future of diamonds becomes more uncertain, if one draws inference from the collapse of the Zambian economy until then solely reliant on copper, as Botswana is currently reliant on diamonds. The future of customs revenues, which is likely to be repealed by both the reformation of SACU and the proposed SADC Free Trade Zone, is also not certain (Ihonybere, 1996). These factors heighten the need to diversify the economy.

The primary question is why the government of Botswana has ignored the role of the informal sector. In 2007, the Central Statistics Office published a study that indicated that the informal sector had grown by 72% between 1999 and 2007 (Moseki, 2009). A study conducted under the aegis of the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis also attested to the fact that the informal sector has contributed to poverty alleviation as the income of those involved in it increased significantly (Kapunda & Mmolawa, 2004). Since the early 2000s there have been attempts by the government to promote the role of small and medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) and nurture good markets for them. The Zezuru are involved in small scale manufacturing and textile activities, yet the government has not made efforts to integrate them into the larger economy leaving them in the informal, hence unregulated economy (Ookeditse, 2011). As a result, this fraction of the informal economy remains ethnocentric, without prospects of creating more employment in manufacturing services as well as broadening the tax revenue base. Although the subject of Botswana's informal economy would entail a discussion of more ethnic groups, this paper will limit itself to that of the Zezuru.

In order to investigate these factors, it is important to situate them in the context of Botswana's ethnic politics. The paper focuses on the Zezuru case in preference to other cases of minority groups such as the Kalanga, Wayeyi, Basubiya and Baherero, because they are the most entrepreneurial group in Botswana (Ookeditse, 2008). Furthermore, they are the only minority group that fits within a framework integrating minority, and entrepreneurial or informal economic activity. Thus the exclusion of other groups is by no means coincidental.

## ZEZURU MIGRATION INTO BOTSWANA: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Botswana became a British protectorate in 1885, then known as Bechuanaland Protectorate. This decision followed repeated requests to become a protectorate by leading paramount chiefs of Tswana ethnic groups. The Tswana groups, whose

leaders had sought the protectorateship, were ipso facto given a higher status in the protectorate (Manungo, 1999: 26). It was logical for them to be the first contact of the British authority. Given the lack of the protectorate's economic value, the primary incentive behind colonialism, there was no serious administrative role over the protectorate. The first capital was in Vryburg, in present day South Africa, and the second capital was based in Mafikeng, also in present day South Africa. The Bechuanaland colonial office was headed by a High Commissioner based in distant Cape Town. As a result, current ethnic politics were not the design of the colonial office, but of the Tswana speaking groups within the country.

This power structure gave the Tswana speaking groups more authority while more groups moved into Botswana from politically unstable countries. It is important to note that Botswana was not yet an independent state when other groups moved into the area, which is called present day Botswana. Thus no specific group could legitimately claim territorial jurisdiction. In the least, such a concept was non-existent. Nonetheless, the name Bechuanaland, insinuated de facto recognition of the Tswana groups as custodians of the land. This was a critical juncture that set these groups on a path of dependency that led to where Botswana currently stands in ethnic politics.

The Zezuru trace their origins from present day Zimbabwe. They are the largest clan of the Shona ethnic group in Zimbabwe. They constitute a quarter of the entire Zimbabwean population, with their dialect of Shona considered the most preeminent. It is against this background that the Zezuru and Karanga dialects (not Kalanga) were preferred over other Shona dialects, such as Korekore, Ndaue and Manyika, during the standardization of the Shona language in the post-colonial Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2009: 33–34; Stokes, 2009: 755). However, despite being the largest Shona group in Zimbabwe and existing in large numbers in Botswana, the Zezuru are not even considered an official minority in Botswana.

The Zezuru community in Botswana migrated as a result of political persecution of a religious group, who followed a Christian leader known as Johane Masowe.<sup>(6)</sup> His movement was driven by a combination of religious and political goals aimed at “liberating African natives from colonial oppression” (Engelke, 2005: 781–782). The movement grew in leaps and bounds earning the name “*Vapostori*,” a Shona version of the term, “apostles.” The central pillar of their doctrine is economic self-sufficiency. Prior to migrating to other parts of Southern Africa, the group increasingly became identified with social entrepreneurship. The common description of the group in Botswana is that they are industrious and adhere to a strong work ethic. This is a contrast with the broader society, which the Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC) often berates for a “poor work ethic” (BNPC, 2010; Segatsho, 2012). This doctrine underpins the economic ways of the Zezuru community to this day.

The group that migrated into Botswana only formed part of the larger movement started by John Masowe. Following the banishing of Masowe to South Africa, the movement split within Zimbabwe. One of the splinter groups led by Ebrahim Moyo migrated into then Bechuanaland Protectorate in the late 1940s (Makgala, 2006). They settled in Moroka village, not distant from the border with Rhodesia, in the then Tati District. The district is inhabited by the Kalanga ethnic group,

which is culturally and linguistically similar to the broader Shona ethnic group. Historical records show that the Kalanga were once part of the Mwenemutapa Shona dynasty which stretched from the Mashonaland area to present day Boteti area in Botswana (Van Waarden, 1988). It was due to the cultural and ethnic similarities that the Zezuru found it easier to settle among the Kalanga.

A few changes and search for economic prosperity led them to move to other parts of Botswana, particularly preferring and concentrating in the “eastern belt.”<sup>(7)</sup> First, Chief Moroka contracted Ebrahim Moyo and his followers to build a primary school for the village in exchange for an arrangement to pay taxes three years in advance. The tax receipts guaranteed citizenship in Bechuanaland and South Africa (Tshambani, 1979, cited in Makgala, 2006). This arrangement angered the British colonial office. Second, within a relatively short period the Zezuru resented the form of tacit oppression they began to incur as migrants in Moroka. It is against this background that they subsequently migrated to Francistown. Francistown was then a flourishing gold-mining town. It was in Francistown that the *Vapostori* first earned the name “Mazezuru,” which stuck to this day. They subsequently increased in number and settled in other areas such as Mandunyane and Shashe before spreading to other economically viable centres including the capital city of Gaborone. However, their largest concentrations are found along the “eastern belt.”

## BOTSWANA’S MODERN ETHNIC POLITICS: TRACING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Ethnicity issues in present day Botswana are mired in a paradox, to the extent that the analysis of its politics presents a serious challenge. First, since 1964, the national census does not record ethnic or racial background (Parsons, 1999). Ironically, one cannot infer ethnic or tribal population statistics from those of given districts because a district rarely consists of a single tribe. For example, there are Xhosa populations scattered all over the country from Francistown (North East), through Mahalapye (Central District) to Manyana (Southern Kweneng District). The Herero, predominantly found in Ngamiland District, are also concentrated in larger numbers in Mahalapye as well as in settlements such as Sechele in North-East District (Nkala, 2004). The geospatial population of the Zezuru shows a similar pattern, and are found throughout the country. As a result, the task of determining the numeric percentage of the Zezuru becomes more daunting. Second, the Botswana government maintains the policy of the constitution that plainly designates eight Tswana-speaking groups as “majority tribes,” relegating non-Tswana speakers to a minority status, including the Zezuru (Constitution of Botswana, Sections 77–79). This makes it difficult to debate minority status from a scholarly basis. This quagmire renders analysis to a less-quantitative and perhaps ethnographic process.

The compact structure of ethnic politics does not necessarily explain what on one hand can be perceived as the social exclusion of the Zezuru. Makgala (2006) argues that when the Zezuru settled in Francistown their economic lifestyle appealed

to large numbers of the natives. However, the Zezuru embarked on a process of ethnic “othering” and discrimination calling the natives “*marudzi*” (foreigners). Several natives sought to join the Zezuru and were expelled from the religious movement. The expelled non-Zezuru subsequently moved to other parts of the country including the greater Tonota area (Shashe and Mandunyane), while others moved to Gaborone and Lobatse. There is not enough evidence to support the claim of mass appeal of the Zezuru to the locals: there is no evidence of economic exchange nor intermarriage and other elements of cross-cultural influences. Contrarily, the Zezuru often live in designated parts of numerous settlements. This practice backdates to the 1940s before Botswana became a republic.

The systemic placement of the Zezuru in the periphery of most of these settlements was caused by ethnic resentment by the Tswana groups and the colonial administration’s attempt to control migration. The British colonial office passed the “African Immigration Proclamation of 1941” to control African migration into Bechuanaland. It stated that all Africans “domiciled south of the Equator may enter the protectorate provided [they are] in possession of a pass signed by a person authorized to sign passes” from the sending country (Makgala, 2006: 11). In 1957, the African Advisory Council (AAC) sought to repeal the law, pointing out the implications of “unregulated” migration. Makgala argued that one of the major concerns was directed towards the Zezuru. In the historical context of village compositions, where the royal lineage proceeded from the nucleus, wards in the periphery were given to alien populations including the Zezuru. This marks the beginning of systemic and ethnic exclusion of the Zezuru. Their invisibility and exclusion continues to this day. The Zezuru are rarely mentioned as an ethnic minority in secondary education “social studies” curricula.

It is of interest to note that the constitutional review of Sections 77–79 did not change the situation much.<sup>(8)</sup> For example, it capitalized on the Tswana-based system of having a “*kgosi*,” chief, using the “*kgotla*” or customary court as a platform for consultation.<sup>(9)</sup> Furthermore, it gives the minister of local government the power to decide which group can be recognized as a tribe (see Bogosi Act 2008: Sections 3–7). This is highly problematic on a number of levels. First, it is imperative to note the Tswana-centric nomenclature used in this piece of legislation. The Zezuru in Botswana have no equivalent of a “*kgosi*.” Second, the Bogosi Act Section 3(1–2) states that the minister of local government shall take into account the history and structure of the tribal community before deciding whether to recognize it as a tribe, and this is to be done in a “*kgotla*.” As much as the Zezuru do not have a “*kgotla*,” if they are to be consulted in a “*kgotla*,” it will be borrowed, a symbolism implying tribal subjugation. If the minister of local government, takes the tribal histories and structures into consideration, is that not likely to further polarize tribal grouping and thus leave groups such as the Zezurus in the economic periphery? Since formal economic consultations often extend to the “*kgotla*,” this results in the systemic alienation of some groups, such as the Zezuru. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the government of Botswana has challenged or exhorted the Zezuru to establish political structures comparable to the “*kgotla*” or similar to those of other minority groups. If the Zezuru are a unique group, what steps has the government extended to ensure that there is no

economic exclusion of any group?

The idea of the Zezuru adopting political structures similar to those of other ethnic groups pales in the context of the larger problem of ethnic exclusion in Botswana. To be sure, there are other minority ethnic groups such as the Kalanga, Basubiya, and others that have comparable political structures headed by a “*kgosi*,” yet the constitution retains the primacy of the eight Tswana-speaking tribes, in that the chiefs of minority groups are elected while those of the Tswana-speaking groups are not. There are still ethnic groups that are not represented in the House of Chiefs,<sup>(10)</sup> despite the fact that the Constitutional Amendment Act of 2005 increased the number of House seats from 15 to 35 (Ditshwanelo, 2007). These changes were of no significant relevance to some minority groups such as the Zezuru, as it stands. This not only provides room for political subjugation but economic exclusion in the sense that the public consultations on economic programmes still takes place using the “*kgotla*” as a platform. Contrary to popular belief, the “*kgotla*” is not entirely inclusive and open, because the youth, the employed, and non-conformist public are hardly part of it. Minority groups that feel threatened by the powerful tribes will avoid these platforms as it were (Makgala, 2006). This means that minorities such as the Zezuru, among other groups, will not economically benefit from the “*kgotla*” system.

## THE INFORMAL ECONOMY OF THE ZEZURU AND BOTSWANA’S DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Entrepreneurship is the mainstay of the Zezuru community. During their early days of settling in Botswana, local chiefs entered into contracts to undertake construction projects while the Kalanga natives, who were also under hard labour conditions imposed by the BaNgwato tribe and the protectorate administration, simply passed projects to the Zezuru (Tshambani, 1979). The attempt to promote self-reliance as one of the national principles in post-independence Botswana did not materialize, mainly due to the advent of a welfare state. The creation of the welfare services did not affect the Zezuru as much as it eluded the mainstream society. The reasons for these are simple. First, the Zezuru do not place a premium on white-collar jobs (Wapitso, 2008). Second, in the author’s observations the Zezuru embrace formal education in so far as it can sustain their economic lifestyle. In that manner, girls and boys often complete schooling up to junior and secondary school, respectively.<sup>(11)</sup> Subsequently the Zezuru youth forgo public school to work in the informal economy that revolves around their ethnic and religious movement.

The foremost feature of the Zezuru economy is small-scale manufacturing. The intensive labour is often left to males. Small-scale manufacturing is often characterized by woodwork and metal workshops. The Zezuru men make typical furniture that is often sold elsewhere, including chairs, tables, wardrobes, and drawer chests (Ookeditse, 2008). The metal products range from household goods such as pots, buckets, bathtubs and metal chests to larger products such as metal gates, burglar-bars, car bumpers, animal cages and animal or cargo trailers.

The Zezuru are also known for their skills in auto and electrical mechanics. Many Zezulu men often work as what is known as a “bush mechanic.” They often provide mechanical services to lower class clients. However, the concept of economic class in Botswana is often evasive because there is a larger number of the “working poor” as a result of inflation and higher cost of living (Mogotsi, 2012). As a result, those in the lower rungs of the public sector often rely on the mechanical services of the Zezuru because they are cheaper and can be negotiated to reasonable prices. The mechanical service extends to the repair of radio and television sets and other household electronics. This market revolves around a degree of social capital because populaces in Botswana are very small compared to other countries where informal economies exist in larger numbers.

The Zezuru often have a marked presence in the transportation industry. In Francistown, Gaborone, Lobatse and Selibe-Phikwe, the Zezuru operate taxi or cab services. One long-distance express service owned by a Zezuru family is a fleet of *Zikhale* buses. It is important to take note how the Zezuru often help each other with start-up capital in setting up these transport business. This is not only limited to the transportation business but found in other businesses mentioned above. This start-up money is often given to young men in order to attain economic self-sufficiency.

The Zezuru investment in financial and resource capital is very minimal, with more focus on growth and little urge towards reckless profit making. While the formal economy focuses on making profit and becoming more competitive, this idea is distant from the Zezuru informal economy. Due to little focus on profit-making, the Zezuru manufacturing rarely evinces some form of investment in order to improve production. That is to say, although there is much buying and selling, this economy usually lacks a market-oriented capitalist drive. Questions can arise as to why despite years of this robust economic activity, the Zezuru have not attempted to upgrade their economic activities to move into larger manufacturing industries. Is it because of a lack of knowledge? Is it lack of access to government resources given to other citizen, or mere indifference?

There is no study by government agencies or academia to investigate the extent to which size the Zezuru informal economy can achieve if it were to be absorbed into the mainstream. There has been little effort to take a leaf from research on how Japanese *keiretsu* (family businesses), which developed into *zaibatsu*, became the mainstay of the Japanese economy (Cusumano, 1985). It is inevitable to note the extent to which ethnic politics will obscure government policies. To that end, the Zezuru will always be left out of any economic diversification policy. Government support of thriving businesses and small and medium enterprises has resulted in growth elsewhere (Jwa, 2002). In the absence of the ethnic exclusion and discrimination, would the absorption of Zezuru into the formal economy result in greater growth for Botswana?

A form of arbitrary pricing plays a critical role in the sales of goods thus obscuring the real dividend that can yield from Zezuru production and services. Because the informal economy does not have accountability to pay taxes and to make profit in a competitive environment, there is often carelessness towards pricing. Whether the price is higher or lower than its actual value makes no differ-



ence in the informal market. When it comes to manufacturing, the products are often of better quality and durability but priced lower than the products from businesses in the formal sector. This means that the latter loses its market to the informal sector. The same applies to merchandize that is sold by the female vendors who buy fruits from across the border (in Zimbabwe) and sell them at lower or higher prices depending on the seller (or sometimes the buyer's) preferences. If regulated, the Zezuru economy would ensure capital asset, and the state would generate enough revenues from this formerly untapped service and manufacturing sector.

The presence of the female Zezuru community in the textile industry appears to have escaped development policy analysts. BIDPA, the policy think tank, and the World Bank commissioned a background study assessing the prospects of the textile industry in Botswana (Salm et al, 2004). The study did not include those in the informal sector, particularly failing to note the government's indifference to the economic activities of the Zezuru within this subsector. The Zezuru have been involved in trading of textiles in the informal sector for years. This role has particularly been reserved for women in the patriarchal society. It should be of interest why the government has largely promoted gender empowerment within the mainstream society but remained oblivious to the plight of women in "obscured" minorities. Is it more important to empower women to be more socially assertive or empower them to be more economically capable or viable? This failure to help a group that is already making headway and capable of improving the broader economy, to export levels, pins holes into the government development strategy.

The reasons for the lack of access to government venture capital among the Zezuru is open to debate. The government of Botswana has a history of providing investment or economic incentives. The Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) offered all citizens a minimum of P 75,000 (US\$9,600) up to a then maximum of P 2,000,000 (US\$256,200), and included funding for unskilled labour (Valentine, 1993b). In the early 2000s, the grant scheme was converted to a loan scheme known as the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) (CEDA, 2011). It is rational to interrogate why the government, in its intent to nurture an entrepreneurial society, avoided challenging the Zezuru into modernizing their entrepreneurship. It is important to note that educational background and experience were neither a prerequisite for FAP grants nor are they a requirement for the present CEDA loans and grants as well as the Youth grant that amount to a ceiling of P 100,000. These two agencies work in concert with the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) to prepare business proposal and provide training and mentorship (LEA, 2011). This begs the question as to why the local authorities have not engaged the Zezuru to aspire for this risk-free start-up capital. If the local and central governments have been able to engage the Zezuru over accepting immunization (Modikwa, 2011), which was an enormous endeavour because the Zezulu often rejected such medical attention, why do they fail to engage them on more pertinent issues of the economy? Is it ethnic bias and exclusion, or a problem in government policy?

It might be useful to broaden the scope within which to interrogate government



policy in making use of indigenous knowledge, skills and resources. First, it is paradoxical that when the government introduced its economic diversification policy, the government had already started on a broad centralization policy which virtually reduced the powers of local governments, hence alienating minorities which are often outside urban areas (Dipholo & Mothusi, 2005). Although the Zezuru are also found in urban areas in significant proportions, it is important to note the centralization process stripped municipal authorities of development policy implementation. If a municipality is disempowered then it cannot reach marginalized group such as the Zezuru. Second, the government may have centralized authority and resource, but it alienated the contribution of indigenous knowledge and skills that are often found outside the urban areas. Systems meant to ensure food security, such as *masotla*,<sup>(12)</sup> fisheries among other minorities in the north-west; and other SMME attempts have faced uncertainty or ended in a complete demise, resulting in deeper levels of poverty. Thus, financial resources flow from the government with a loss, due to the lack of robust monitoring and support. This broader failure explains the gap in the failure to engage different communities of which the Zezuru are only a part.

## CONCLUSION

Neglecting the Zezuru informal economy comes with costs to Botswana's development strategy. The Zezuru community engages in entrepreneurial activities that are in line with Botswana's diversification strategy. The intent has been to increase the number of SMMEs and improve existing but weak economies. Not only has the government of Botswana failed to improve modernize the informal economy, but particularly made no attempts to engage the Zezuru community. The Zezuru informal economy remains strong in manufacturing (steel and wood), textiles, transport and automotive services. The government has made no attempt to mobilize them to access venture capital that is readily available to citizens in the mainstream society. Consequently, the government continues to lose plenty of revenue as the informal sector grows at a considerable percentage. The exclusion of this entrepreneurial minority group means lower quotas for entrepreneurship that could employ more people and modernize the economy. This phenomenon is traceable to the historical maltreatment of the Zezuru since the genesis of their migration in the pre-independence Botswana. Their "invisibility" resulted in economic and social exclusion. Despite these conditions, the Zezuru informal economy—born out of religious and ethnic beliefs—remains strong and continues to be a way of life for every member of the Zezuru ethnic group. In the absence of an all-inclusive ethnic policy, and a roll back to silent discriminatory practice and indifference, the Zezuru will remain in the periphery of Botswana's development strategy. As a result, Botswana will fail to meet its development targets within its economic diversification drive.

## NOTE

- (1) Noble quotes Immanuel Wallerstein, who says that “neither the ‘development’ [n]or the ‘underdevelopment’ of any specific territorial unit can be analysed or interpreted without fitting it into the cyclical rhythms and secular trends of the world economy as a whole.”
- (2) Gaborone is the capital city, located in the southeastern part of the country. Francistown is the second largest city located in the northeastern part of the country.
- (3) A parastatal institution or company is one which is partly controlled by government and co-administered by a private partnership.
- (4) These are Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland where local currencies are pegged to the South African Rand. Botswana switched from the Rand to the Pula in 1975, but floats close to the Rand.
- (5) SACU countries have an external tariff for exports which are collected into the South African National Revenue Fund and thereafter shared according to a formula among the different countries as per the size of their economies. For a clearer history of SACU revenue sharing formula, see Grynberg & Motswapong, 2003
- (6) John Masowe was born Shoniwa Masodze, but changed his name after he claimed to have received a divine mandate to liberate African natives from colonial oppression.
- (7) The “eastern belt” is a term used in social studies to refer to the mountainous and hilly range that stretches from the southeast to the northeast of the country. It is important to note that the main railway line built by Cecil John Rhodes stretches along these mountains. Moreover, development and particularly the most populous settlements (including urban and semi-urban) are concentrated along this stretch. The rest of major settlements (townships, agro-towns and urban villages) are sparsely located to the west of this stretch. The Zezuru concentrations are mostly populated along these areas along the railway lines.
- (8) As Sections 77–79 designated the eight Tswana-speaking ethnic groups as the major “tribes,” the rest were considered subservient to these eight.
- (9) The word “*kgosi*” means “chief” in Setswana. A “*kgotla*” is a place where the chief exercises his dual functions: On the one hand a “*kgotla*” is a customary court, and on the other, a democratic political forum where members of the public freely express opinions before a communal decision is made.
- (10) *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* is a de facto Senate, which advises the parliament on cultural issues. It used to be called “The House of Chiefs.” It is an equivalent of the *House of Lords* in the United Kingdom and an equivalent of the Senate in the USA. It seats collective ethnic leadership, which comprises female and male traditional kings/chiefs.
- (11) It is important to note that in Botswana secondary schooling is divided into two phases. The junior secondary school runs from form 1 to form 3. There is a qualifier examination to complete the remaining two years of senior secondary school. Failure results in the complete disqualification from the formal education system. There are plans to merge the two systems, but this political rhetoric has not become policy.
- (12) Gaotlhobogwe (2011) wrote that, “*Masotla*” are pieces of massive land held in trust by a “*kgosi*” for the entire tribe, maintained and ploughed by youth regiments known as “*mephato*.”

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